

**Washington, D.C.** - During an Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on Capitol Hill today, US Rep. David Price (NC-04) challenged Veterans Administration Secretary James Nicholson to explain how the VA will be able to provide adequate health care to our nation's veterans if the Administration cuts funding for biomedical research.

Price said the Durham VAMC is one of the most important veterans research facilities in the country, and it is home to the only VA mental health research center focused on post-deployment mental health conditions, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The President's budget calls for a \$13 million cut in research funding within the Veterans Administration, from \$412 million last year to \$399 million this year. Price told Secretary Nicholson that some of the labs at the Durham VA are in urgent need of renovation, and he said the cuts would undermine ongoing research at the facility.

"Now is precisely the wrong time to cut funding for research that benefits returning servicemen," Price said. "As our brave men and women return from the war zone, we have a responsibility to take care of any and every health issue they face as a result of their deployment. And as more and more soldiers return from the battlefield, our responsibility to support veterans programs is increasing, not decreasing."

An independent analysis of VA funding completed by four major veterans groups recommends a \$61 million increase in research funding in order to adequately address the challenges facing American veterans, from prosthetics research to mental health care. Participating in the study were the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and AMVETS.

Recent studies also suggest that servicemen and women returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are experiencing higher rates of mental health problems than ever before. A 2005 Army Surgeon General survey of troops returning from the Iraq war found that nearly a third had developed mental health problems three to four months after returning home.

Following the hearing, Price pledged to continue the fight to restore VA research funding.